

Message Text

PAGE 01 BEIRUT 06338 311700 Z

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ACTION NEA-12

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DIA WASHDC

INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMCONSUL DHAHRAN

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY TELAVIV

USMISSION UN

USCINCEUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 6338

DEPT PASS USINT CAIRO

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS PINT LE

SUBJECT: LEBANESE INTERNAL SITUATION

REF: BEIRUT 6033

SUMMARY: WHILE OVERALL SITUATION HAS APPEARANCE OF NEAR-NORMALITY, THERE REMAINS HIGH DEGREE OF UNDERLYING TENSION CAUSED BY UNCERTAIN STATE OF GOL- FEDAYEEN RELATIONS, CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 BEIRUT 06338 311700 Z

EFFORTS BY LEFTIST ELEMENTS (BOTH LEBANESE AND FEDAYEEN) TO KEEP POT BOILING, CONTINUING PRESSURES FROM SYRIA, AND MANEUVERING OF SUNNI MOSLEM POLITICIANS. ARMY WORKING HARD TO MAINTAIN TIGHT CONTROL ON UNAUTHORIZED MOVEMENTS AND ARMS SMUGGLING.

PRES FRANGIE AND ARMY TRYING BRING ABOUT GRADUAL COMPLIANCE WITH FEDAYEEN COMMITMENTS BUT KEEPING WATCHFUL EYE ON POSITION OF OTHER ARAB STATES AS WELL AS INTERNAL TENSION IN ORDER AVOID UNEXPECTED EXPLOSION BY FEDAYEEN AND/ OR INCREASE IN AMOUNT OF CONFESSIONAL POLARIZATION. END SUMMARY.

1. CONTINUING ARMY EFFORTS BRING ABOUT FEDAYEEN COMPLIANCE WITH THEIR COMMITMENTS ARE AT CORE OF UNDERLYING TENSION WHICH PREVAILS THROUGHOUT COUNTRY, DESPITE OUTWARD APPEARANCE OF NEAR-NORMALITY. FEDAYEEN ARE, IN VARYING DEGREES, DRAGGING THEIR FEET. FIRST STAGE OF COMPLIANCE IS UNDERWAY IN BEKAA AND ARQUB, AS FEDAYEEN UNITS ARE LEAVING VILLAGES AND OTHER POSITIONS THEY HAVE LONG BEEN OCCUPYING EAST OF MARJAYOUN- MASNAA ROAD AND IN SOUTHERN ARQUB. THIS MOVEMENT NOT COMPLETE, BUT FEDAYEEN LEADERSHIP HAS PROMISED IT WILL BE COMPLETED BY FIRST WEEK IN JUNE. AS YET NO ACTION HAS BEEN TAKEN RE DISARMING CAMPS. THIS WILL LIKELY BE LAST STEP IN PROCESS, AND ARMY DOES NOT EXPECT THAT THEY WILL BE ABLE OBTAIN MORE THAN TOKEN COMPLIANCE (I. E. REMOVAL OF FEW HEAVY WEAPONS AND HIDING OF REST) UNLESS ORDERED TO MOVE INTO CAMPS BY FORCE. HOWEVER ARMY CONTINUES MAN NUMEROUS CHECKPOINTS IN BEIRUT AND ALONG ROUTES LEADING FROM BORDER AREAS TO BEIRUT. FRENCH MILITARY ATTACHE TOLD DATT THAT HE PASSED THROUGH TWELVE CHECKPOINTS WHICH BEING TIGHTLY CONTROLLED ALONG MAIN BEIRUT- DAMASCUS ROAD. WE UNDERSTAND SIMILAR TIGHT CONTROLS EXIST ALONG SECONDARY ROUTE ACROSS MOUNTAINS FROM RASHAYA TO JEZZIN, AS WELL AS ALONG ROAD LEADING SOUTH FROM NORTHERN SYRIAN- LEBANESE BORDER. THESE CHECKPOINTS HAVE BEEN RESPONSIBLE FOR ARREST OF TENS OF FEDAYEEN OVER PAST WEEK AND CONFISCATION OF CONSIDERABLE QUANTITY ARMS, INCLUDING ANTI TANK ROCKETS, MORTAR ROUNDS AND ANTI TANK MINES. ARMY BELIEVES THAT WHILE SOME NEW ARMS AND AMMO REACHING CAMPS, FEDAYEEN ARE STILL SHORT OF HEAVIER ITEMS SUCH AS ROCKETS, SHELLS AND MINES. THIS WILL BE CONTINUAL PROBLEM.

2. ARMY REPORTS THAT MOST OF THOSE PICKED UP FOR ARMS SMUGGLING AND OTHER VIOLATIONS AND INCIDENTS ARE FROM LEFTIST FEDAYEEN GROUPS (PFLP, PDFLP AND PFLP/ GC) WHO SEEM UNCONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 BEIRUT 06338 311700 Z

WILLING ACCEPT ANY LIMITATIONS. THIS HAS PRODUCED CONSIDERABLE FRICTION BETWEEN LEFTIST GROUPS AND BOTH FATAH AND SA' IQA. MOST SERIOUS INCIDENT TO DATE WAS KIDNAPPING OF THREE LEBANESE SOLDIERS BY PFLP ON MAY 27 IN RETALIATION FOR ARREST BY ARMY OF SECOND- LEVEL PFLP LEADER. BOTH FATAH AND DA' IQA APPLIED HEAVY, IMMEDIATE PRESSURE ON PFLP AND OBTAINED RELEASE OF SOLDIERS, THEREBY AVOIDING ARMY ACTION. PLO EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE PUBLICLY CONDEMNED PFLP "ELEMENTS" AFTER EMERGENCY MEETING TO DISCUSS THIS PROBLEM. RECENT PUBLIC STATEMENTS BY PLO, FATAH AND SA' IQA STRESS NEED TO RESPECT LEBANESE SOVEREIGNTY AND NECESSITY FOR GOOD RELATIONS BETWEEN GOL AND FEDAYEEN. ON OTHER HAND SA' IQA SHOWED ITS INDEPENDENCE BY STAGING BRIEF ARMED FUNERAL PROCESSION OUTSIDE OF SABRA/ SHATILA

CAMP ON MAY 29 WHICH IRRITATED GOL, ALTHOUGH IT DID NOT TRY
BREAK UP PROCESSION BY FORCE.

3. IN ADDITION TO PROBLEMS BY FEDAYEEN LEFTISTS AND FOOT DRAGGING
BY OTHER FEDAYEEN, GOL FACES DETERMINED EFFORT BY VARIOUS
INDIGENOUS LEFTIST GROUPS TO STIR UP TROUBLE BY IDENTIFYING THEM-
SELVES WITH PALESTINIAN CAUSE AND AGITATING FOR DEMONSTRATIONS,
ETC. MOST VISIBLE INCIDENT OF THIS NATURE OCCURRED AT AUB MAY
28 WHEN GROUP OF LEFTISTS (MOSTLY LEBANESE BAATHISTS PLUS FEW
PALESTINIANS AND OTHER NON- LEBANESE) STAGED PROTEST IN WHICH
THEY INSULTED FRANGIE AND KING HUSSEIN AND GLORIFIED FEDAYEEN.
THIS PRODUCED DESIRED RIGHT WING REACTION NEXT DAY WHICH LED
TO CLASH BETWEEN TWO GROUPS AND REQUIRED INTERVENTION OF
LEBANESE SECURITY FORCES. TENSION ON CAMPUS REMAINS HIGH.
LEFTISTS ALSO REPORTEDLY AGITATING CONFESSIONAL ISSUE BY MAKING
COMMON CAUSE WITH SUNNI MOSLEM LEADERS WHO ARE CHARGING (FOR
VARIETY OF REASONS, SOME OF THEM PETTY, SOME NOT) THAT MOSLEMS
NOT GIVEN ADEQUATE SHARE OF POWER IN RUNNING GOL.

4. SYRIA IS CONTINUING SUPPORT BOTH SUNNI MOSLEM LEADERS (SUCH
AS RASHID KARAME), WHO ARE PUSHING THE CONFESSIONAL QUESTION,
AND THE FEDAYEEN IN THEIR OPPOSITION TO GOL. BORDER REMAINS
CLOSED TO SYRIANS AND LEBANESE AND ALL TRUCK TRAFFIC, MAINTAINING
ECONOMIC PRESSURE ON GOL. SARG HAS NOT MADE CLEAR PRE-
CISELY WHAT IT WISHES FROM GOL AND PROBABLY DOES NOT HAVE
SPECIFIC DEMANDS. ITS BROAD OBJECTIVE OF PRESENTING APPEARANCE
OF FOREMOST DEFENDER OF PALESTINE RESISTANCE AND SUNNI MOSLEMS
OBVIOUSLY MEETS DOMESTIC AND INTRA- ARAB NEEDS OF HAFEZ ASSAD.
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PAGE 04 BEIRUT 06338 311700 Z

SECOND OBJECTIVE OF TRYING INCREASE SYRIAN INFLUENCE AND CONTROL
AMONG FEDAYEEN AND POLITICAL CIRCLES IN LEBANON IS ALSO AN
OBVIOUS ONE OF LONG STANDING.

5. SUNNI MOSLEM POLITICIANS ARE CONTINUING HAMMR AWAY AT
SAME THEMES THEY HAVE PUSHED FOR PAST TEN DAYS (INCLUDING
SUPPORT FOR FEDAYEEN) WITH RASHID KARAME LEADING PACK BECAUSE
INTER ALIA OF PERSONAL PIQUE AND POLITICAL FEAR DIRECTED AT PRIME
MINISTER AMIN AL HAFEZ. SOME OF STREAM SEEMS BE LEAKING OUT
OF THIS PROTEST MOVEMENT, BUT POSSIBILITIES OF CONFESSIONAL
TROUBLES STILL VERY MUCH ALIVE.

6. PRES FRANGIE AND PRIME HAFEZ ARE CONTINUING CONSULT ALL
SORTS AND VARIETIES OF LOCAL POLITICAL, PROFESSIONAL AND RELIGIOUS
LEADERS AS WELL AS ARAB ENVOYS, AND TO WRESTLE WITH SUCH
PROBLEMS AS: WHETHER OR NOT TO CHANGE COMPOSITION OF CABINET
TO APPEASE SOME OF OPPOSITION; HOW TO OBTAIN LARGEST POSSIBLE
VOTE OF CONFIDENCE FROM ASSEMBLY (VOTE WILL TAKE PLACE ABOUT
JUNE 10); AND HOW TO GET NEW GOVERNMENT FUNCTIONING AT SOME-
THING LIKE NORMAL RATE. THIS IN ADDITION TO MAJOR PROBLEM OF
HOW TO BRING ABOUT MAXIMUM IMPLEMENTATION OF FEDAYEEN
COMMITMENTS WITHOUT PROVOKING EXPLOSION FOR WHICH GOL NOT

PRESENTLY PREPARED EITHER MILITARILY OR POLITICALLY. THUS FAR,
FRANGIE HAS SHOWN CONSIDERABLE SKILL BUT, AS NOTED ABOVE,
MANY MAJOR PROBLEMS REMAIN UNRESOLVED.
HOUGHTON

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